How to Write Successful Google Ads

A guide for easily creating effective

headlines & descriptions for your ads.

**EXAMPLES INCLUDED**

DATCH HAVEN

CEO of KEY COMMERCE

Still, after nearly 20 years of working with Google Ads, scaling up more e-commerce sites than I can count, and spending hundreds of millions of dollars to generate billions, still — writing ads remains my favorite part of growing an account.

Well, I should say, writing effective ads. The wonderful thing about Google Ads is that effectiveness can be quantitatively assessed.

◼ Did this ad entice more clicks? **(CTR)**
◼ Did this ad get better positioning? **(Ad Rank)**
◼ Did this ad better qualify the shoppers clicking it? **(Bounce rate, conversion rate)**

After countless tests, I got a feel for the type of headlines that succeed. That's the experience informing this guide. But! You don't compete with advertisers that have a hundred times your budget based on a feel. You'll get trounced that way. Speaking from experience. No, you...
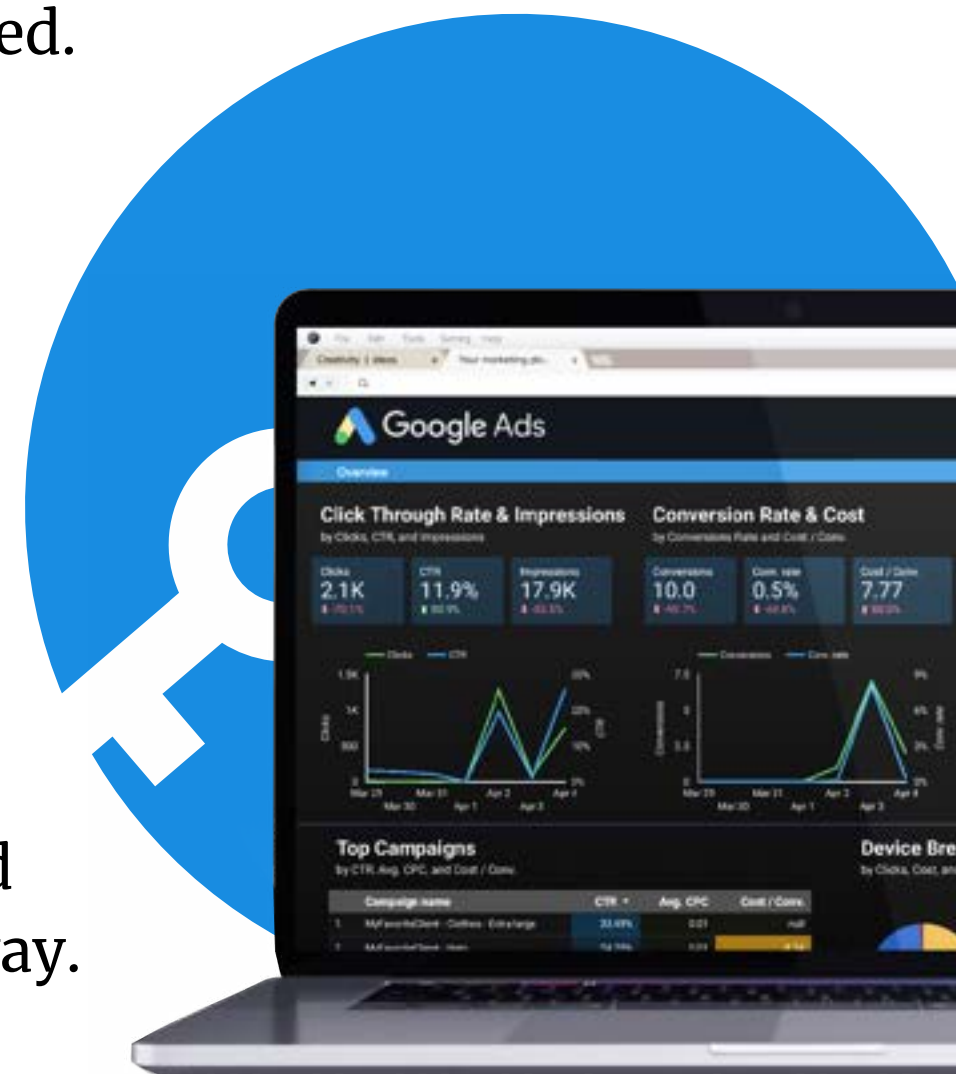
Test. Then you test. Make yourself a sandwich, and then test again.

So what you'll get from this guide is the distillation of the greatest hits in ad copywriting to start with. It's what I've seen work most often and what the team at KeyCommerce starts with when launching their first ad tests. Then it's up to them to optimize from there, as it will be up to you.

This e-book is our actual standard operating procedure, (with a few tweaks made to address you). Of course, no guide can cover every type of store we work with, so it's aimed at the fundamentals. It includes plenty of examples as inspiration for your brand and product.

<div align="center">Datch Haven · KeyCommerce</div>

Note:

*We cover the **RSA** (Responsive Search Ad) format here, which is specific to Google's search campaign types. However, the strategies and tactics outlined are easily usable in other types of ad formats, such as headline and description assets for Performance Max. They're even useful for other channels like Facebook.*

Last thing:

If this helps you, or you have criticisms to share, I'd love to hear from you at

feedback@keycommerce.com

How To Write Successful Google Ads

> **Note:** All of the examples in this ebook focus on headlines with their 30 maximum characters. However, everything taught here wholly applies to descriptions with 90 maximum characters.

A Successful Ad Does 3 Things

1 It qualifies the shopper...

There are many ways your ad can and will show to an unqualified shopper. What's an 'unqualified shopper'?

- They searched for "dress shoes" and your store only sells tennis shoes.
- They searched for "greek mythology goddess nike" and your store sells Nike shoes.
- They searched for "cookie recipe" and your store sells cookie-shaped recipe card holders.

Your ads should give every clue possible for what they can expect after they click it. It prevents too many shoppers from clicking your ad and then bouncing right back out of your store with disappointment — a terrible signal to Google and a waste of your money.

2 It entices the click...

During the fraction of a second that most shoppers will take to scan the dozens of links and options vying for their attention, your ad copy has to intrigue them enough to spend their time in clicking to and evaluating yet another website.

3 It primes the shopper...

This is an often overlooked aspect of the power of ads, even by seasoned professionals. "Priming" in marketing is a shopper's subconscious reaction to stimuli. (Text, in this case.)

For example, if the ad copy says "Cheapest X-Widgets In Town", shoppers may be primed to view the store as a bargain shop. If the store wants to compete on its product quality instead, then this is poor text to use.

> The **ad copy** should support the overall brand message and unique selling proposition of the store — the reason this shopper has to buy here and not elsewhere.

The Minimum Standards To Hold Yourself To When Creating Ads

> *In creating a great Responsive Search Ad (RSA), let's first cover the minimum standards we hold to.*

All 15 headlines and all 4 descriptions must be written.

Why? Because Google prefers to test as many variations as it can, and it scientifically makes sense to do so. Even if that fifteenth headline isn't your favorite, or that fourth description you've written isn't going to win you an award, fill them all in.

The RSA should be specifically written for its ad group's targets.

Why? If you have a campaign selling roses and an ad group within that campaign for keywords around red roses, then it's an absolute waste not to have your ad copy specifically written about red roses instead of just roses. That may seem obvious, but I've audited an astounding number of accounts that don't do this. It's poor structure, and it hurts the ad's effectiveness.

Each RSA should be at 'Excellent' ad strength.

Why? This is where we can afford a little lenience. An 'Excellent' ad strength should be aimed for, but it's not always possible in every circumstance.

For example, pinning a headline to a position gets Google grumpy, detracting from your ad strength, but sometimes it's the better option.

Each ad group should have at least one RSA (Responsive Search Ad) active.

Why? This is a legacy rule from when ETAs (Extended Text Ads) were an available option to create. But now, it's a reminder that even if you have ETAs still active in your ad groups, you must still create an RSA to compete with it.

Only 1 pinned headline or description

Why? Pinning a clear Call To Action headline to position 2 can work well for non-brand ads, and pinning a Brand headline to any position can work well for brand ads (ads targeting searches for your brand). However, Pinning any more than 1 hinders Google's ability to mix and match your assets to find the optimal ways to display them.

Ad Strength: Shooting For 'Excellent'

Google uses ad strength to measure how well an ad creative follows its best practices for optimal performance. It also helps you maximize your ad's performance and improve overall effectiveness. Achieving an 'Excellent' ad strength becomes much easier with practice.

The most important things to know are:

- Ad strength increases by the ad copy having direct relevance to the keywords in the ad group, repeating those terms.

- Ad strength further increases with variety.

Take the time to do this right.

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed
(*buyer security*)

In Business Since 1985
(*establishes trust*)

Free Shipping over $100
(*save money*)

Official Online Shop
(*establishes trust*)

Ways to achieve an 'Excellent' ad score:

- Write the maximum 15 headlines, including all the keywords targeted in the ad group.

- Write the maximum 4 descriptions, including at least some of the keywords targeted in the ad group.

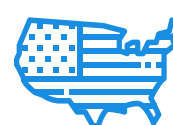- Write a variety* of headlines. Some typical variations outside of the specific product examples include:

Backed by a 5-Year Warranty
(*establishes trust*)

Proudly Made in the USA
(*nationalistic appeal*)

Limited Stock Available Now
(*implies need for urgency*)

Same-Day Shipping
(*convenience*)

Note:

More variations and examples are included in the next section. The purpose here is to enforce the importance of variety as a way to achieve an 'Excellent' ad score.

This is not about creating a word salad of keywords that's as painful to read as it is to write just to flesh out 15 headlines. There are always more ways to write strong, unique from-each-other headlines for every conceivable ad group theme.

The Types Of Headlines To Write

There are several ways to think of the headlines and the approaches you should take to write them.

Here's how we do it at KeyCommerce.

Descriptive Headlines

These headlines directly describe what the product is. These are often the most powerful headlines because they (hopefully) match what the shopper is looking for.

Specificity often improves these headlines. For example, if a shopper is looking for a "leather watch band for my Apple Watch 9", which headline do you think appeals most?

- **Best Watches & Accessories**
- **Leather & Faux-Leather Bands**
- **Apple Watch 9 Leather Bands**

Remember, you're looking to qualify the shopper as much as they're looking to qualify if your ad is worth their time. If your product or product category has a specific niche, own it in the headlines and descriptions. Being overly general is almost always a terrible idea.

Someone searching for "tennis shoes" is less likely to be attracted to this headline:

High Quality Sports Footwear

Over these headlines:

ASICS® Gel 8 Tennis Shoes

Hard Court Style Tennis Shoes

2023's Best Men's Tennis Shoes

Yes, they may not be looking for ASICS or "Gel" tennis shoes. True, they may not be looking for "hard court" tennis shoes. And yeah, they may be looking for women's tennis shoes, not men's. Great! Then they won't click the ad and waste your money.

But more than likely, Google will have an idea of what they're looking for. And by knowing the content of your ad, it will make an algorithmic decision that even saves you the risk of an impression if they're unqualified. That's a lot of benefits from simply writing specificity into your headlines.

Trust Headlines

Trust cannot be understated as a factor affecting every shopper's buying decision. Fear of being scammed and feeling foolish will kill any consideration of purchase if it's heightened by any red flags. Red flags (as they relate to copy) often include:

🚩 **Typos, misspellings, poor grammar, lack of proper capitalization or punctuation in the copy**

🚩 **Poor or little information**

🚩 **Unbelievable claims, exaggeration, excessive superlatives, and exclamation marks**

🚩 **Mismatching information**

Avoiding these red flags is just the start. Trust can also be boosted in several ways that establish the store as credible.

Trust: Leadership, Boasts, & Authority

Shoppers often see the bigger stores as the safer bets, so it's usually best to impress upon them the seller's leadership or authority in the space when possible.

- **Leading Provider of X-Widgets**
- **The Original (and Best) X-Widgets**
- **#1 X-Widget Maker in the USA**

Trust: Business Longevity

Shoppers tend to trust more established businesses, assuming that long-lasting stores are still operating because they're trustworthy.

- **Serving Wisconsin Since 1974**
- **Premium X-Widgets Since 1974**
- **ACME Co. – Est. 1974**
- **Happy Customers for 47 Years**

Trust: Reasons to Believe

"**Reasons to believe**" come in a great variety of statements. They're simply evidence to a shopper's mind that this is a legitimate business and, therefore, product.

- **100% Satisfaction Guaranteed**
- **97.8% Satisfaction Rate**
- **Rated 4.9/5 by Customers**
- **Backed by a Lifetime Warranty**
- **Served Over 20,000 Businesses**
- **As Seen on CBS & Fox**
- **"The best investment I've made"**

Urgency Headlines

The oldest marketing trick in the book...

- **Limited Stock Available Now**
- **While Supplies Last**
- **Clearance Sale, Today Only**
- **Offer Ends on June 30**

Note:

Two common mistakes with urgency headlines are:

1. *Abusing them, which returning customers notice and trust less over time*
2. *Forgetting to revise or remove the dated headlines after the sale's conclusion.*

Price-Centric Headlines

Many shoppers are looking for pricing information when they search. These can either relate to the current promotion or highlight the value proposition of the product(s).

- **Buy 2 Get 1 Free**
- **20% Less Than Leading Brand**
- **Free Shipping within the USA**
- **Save $50 Off Your First Order**

Geo-Relevancy Headlines

Sometimes location matters, even on the Internet. Whether shoppers are concerned about shipping times or prices, or want to support local businesses, or have a nationalistic pride, inserting location can boost an ad's performance.

- **Fast & Free Shipping in NYC**
- **Proudly Made in the USA**
- **Australian Owned & Operated**
- **California's Top Seller**

Feature Headlines

Features can either be a convenience to the shopper or product callouts and highlights.

- **AfterPay Available**
- **In-Home Delivery Options**
- **Features Natural Sleep Mode**
- **Connects with Wi-Fi**
- **Work with iPhone & Android**
- **Laser & Inkjet Compatible**

Call–To–Action Headlines

Call-to-actions, or CTAs, are often vital signposts in a shopper's journey. Having them in ads makes sense because we're so used to them, and they're relevant to our intent. They can help a shopper take the next step (a site visit) with as little mental processing as possible.

- **Shop Now and Save**
- **Official Site · Order Now**
- **Select Your Preferred Model**
- **Choose Your Color…**
- **Easily Customize Your Order**

Comparative Headlines

Shoppers naturally want to know how a store or product compares to their myriad options, so it only makes sense to set a strong tone here.

- **Outlasts the Leading Brand**
- **Costs 29% Less than XYZ***
- **Compare Us to XYZ***

This works only with trademarks not actively defended in Google Ads. Otherwise, you'll get automatically disapproved, and that asset will need to be written again.

Remarketing Headlines

Remarketing offers an enormous advantage because we have additional data on the shopper, such as:

- They visited the site.
- They viewed a collection.
- They added something to their cart.
- They've purchased something.
- They viewed a product.

With well-structured remarketing lists, we can write enticing headlines based on these contexts in remarketing campaigns. Examples include:

- **Suggested For You…**
- **Interested in more X-Widgets?**
- **Shop the Latest 2022 X-Widgets**
- **Complete Your Order Today**
- **Save an Extra 5% On Your Cart**
- **We've Added More X-Widgets**
- **Price Goes Back Up in {COUNTDOWN(2023-12-31 00:00:00,5)}***

* (see ad customizers section below for how to do this)

Brand Headlines

Last, and certainly not least, are brand headlines. Make sure shoppers know there's a brand to the store and/or product that they should associate with their current consideration, intent, or evaluation phase of their purchase journey.

- **ACME®**
- **ACME® X-Widgets™**

- **ACME® Official Store**
- **Save More with ACME®**

Brand mentions should maintain the stylization of your branding. For example, if you have a stylized brand name such as ACME®, then that should be the way it's written in all ad copy.

For example:

It's Coca-Cola, not CocaCola, Coca Cola, or Coca cola.

It's iPhone, not Iphone, i Phone, or iphone.

It's KeyCommerce, not Keycommerce, Key Commerce, or Keycom.

Consciously or unconsciously, we all notice these details when they're consistent. And we notice inconsistencies, which raise little red flags.

Do what the most jealously guarded, multi-billion dollar brands do. Have one stylization and stick to it.

A side note on trademarks...

Did you know that you can already claim a trademark symbol on your brand name, even if you've never registered it as a trademark?

If your store is named Margaret's Blankets, you have every right to add a ™ symbol beside it. Well, unless someone actually owns that trademark selling blankets. Then you should have researched your new store name a bit better, Margaret.

You're able to use the registered symbol, ®, once you've legally registered your trademark. It's a lot of paperwork and fuss, but it can be worth it as you grow larger.

Sales Headlines (The Art of Selling Through Copy)

> *There's another type of headline that deserves its own section here. The sales headline. The sales headline is the hook*

Not every successful ad needs it. I must stress this.

It can be difficult to write a great sales headline and easy to write a terrible one. An ad with great descriptive, brand, and trust headlines can easily be the winning combination to maximize CTR of qualified shoppers and prime them to buy.

So if you're feeling a bit stretched from reading all the types and examples of the previous section, or you're getting impatient to just get to writing your successful ads now, well, you're just about ready. Skip to the last section and skim its advice and the last few tricks shared, and you're good to go. Seriously, you're going to write way better ads than your competition.

Still here? Kay, let's talk about writing a great hook headline

In Jim Edwards' words, author of **Copywriting Secrets**, "copywriting is the art of selling". To sell, or at least entice a click, you should use some headlines to communicate why the shoppers need what the store is selling.

Hopes, fears, dreams, and desires are the best buying motivators because **"without a strong why, people don't buy."**

The 10 Reasons Why People Buy

1. Make money
2. Save money
3. Save time
4. Avoid effort
5. Escape pain

6. Get comfort/pleasure
7. Achieve hygiene and health
8. Gain praise
9. Feel more loved
10. Increase popularity/social status

In order to know how your product(s) can help shoppers, you need to brainstorm…

An exercise for brainstorming headlines that sell

Writing several headlines for any of the pertinent questions here will help you come up with solid ad copy that entices more clicks and primes the shopper for what they'll read on the landing page:

- What are the ways the product(s) can help the shopper make money?

- How can the product(s) help the shopper save money over the next week, month, or year?

- How much time can the product save them, and what else could they do with that time?

- What is something they won't have to do anymore once they get the product(s)?

- What physical pain does the product eliminate for them, and what does that mean for their life and business?

- How does the product eliminate mental pain or worry for the shopper?

- What are three ways the product helps the shopper feel more comfortable?

- How does the product help the shopper achieve hygiene?

- How does the product help the shopper be healthy?

- What are three ways the product is going to help the shopper be the envy of their friends? How will buying the product make them feel more popular and increase their social status?

"Creative without strategy is called art. Creative with strategy is called advertising." – Jeff I. Richards

Making Use Of Ad Customizers

> *Ad customizers allow you to insert dynamic information into your headlines and descriptions.*

In this section, we're going to cover the easiest method of implementing these, which is to just set them up when you're writing your RSAs.

Does a successful ad need an ad customizer? Certainly not. We get by without them to great effect. But some industries are so competitive that any edge is welcome. Ad customizers can offer that.

Note:

*There's another method for creating ad customizers that involves creating a file to supply the data that will be inserted based on the conditions met. You can **learn more about that here**. It's neat, and I like it, but I'm not going to cover it in this guide.*

The 3 Types Of Ad Customizers

There are three types of information that you can dynamically generate for a headline or description:

1 Keyword insertion

This uses the term that the shopper used to trigger your ad.

Example:

The shopper searches for "groovy lava lamps", and the headline serves **Shop Groovy Lava Lamps.**

2 Countdown

This uses an event date set by you to show a countdown in the ad.

Example:

You've set the end date for your sale as January 31st, and the shopper sees on January 27th a headline stating **Sale Ends In 4 Days.**

3 Location

This uses the shopper's current location to inform the data inserted into the ad copy.

Example:

The shopper searches from Miami and sees the headline **Free Shipping to Miami.**

Setting Up Keyword Insertion

Write the default text that will appear if the keywords the shopper searched for can't appear in the headline.

When Keyword Insertion won't work.

The most common reasons a search term won't get inserted into the headline or description are:

- the search term is too long
- the search term contains profanity
- the search term is incorrectly spelled

Selecting the case

Next, you'll choose the case. The case is the type of capitalization you want your keyword text to have. You can choose between 3 types of capitalization:

Title case:
The first letter of all keywords will be capitalized

1

Sentence case:
Only the first letter of the first keyword will be capitalized

2

Lower case:
No letters will be capitalized.

3

Syntax: {Keyword:default text}

Automatically update your ads with the keywords that caused your ads to show Learn more

Default text ⓘ

Case ⓘ

◯ Title case

◉ Sentence case

◯ Lower case

APPLY

The Output

For each case, here's the example output if a shopper searches **"red widgets":**

- **Headline input:** Shop   {KeyWord:X-Widgets}   Now

  Title case output: Shop Red Widgets Now

- **Headline input:** Shop   {Keyword:X-Widgets}   Now

   Sentence case output: Shop Red widgets Now

- **Headline input:** Shop   {keyword:X-Widgets}   Now

  Lowercase output: Shop red widgets Now

Important notes

If the shopper were to search for "red widjits", they would see the default text instead due to the misspelling because it's against Google policy to have misspelled ad copy

Also, if the shopper were to search for "deepest magenta red widgets available", they would see the default text because inserting their search term would exceed the headline character limit.

- Shop X-Widgets Now

💡 **Google Ads [help article on location insertions.](#)**

Setting Up A Countdown

Set the date being counted down to. (1)

Syntax: {COUNTDOWN(yyyy-MM-dd HH:mm:ss,daysBefore)}

Counts down to a set time, adjusted to the time zone of the person searching Learn more

Countdown ends ⓘ   Dec 31, 2022   ▾

Set if the countdown ends at the start of the day on that date, the end of the day on that date, or at a custom time during that day (2)

Start of day ▾   00:00:00

Countdown starts ⓘ   5   day(s) before countdown end date

Time zone ⓘ   ◯ Account time zone   (GMT+08:00) Hong Kong Standard Time

Set when you want the countdown to begin counting down. (By the way, if you leave this blank, it will start showing 5 days before your end date.) (3)

◉ Ad viewer's time zone

(4) **Select the time zone that you want the countdown to adhere to.**

APPLY

The Output

Once you've set up your variables, the text in the headline or description should look something like this:

◼   Input: Sale Ends In {COUNTDOWN(2023-12-31 23:59:59,5)}

When a shopper sees this on December 27th, they'll see:

Sale Ends In 4 days

When a shopper sees this on December 31st at 11 am, they'll see:

Sale Ends In 12 hours

When a shopper sees this on December 31st at 11 pm, they'll see:

Sale Ends In 59 minutes

💡 **Google Ads help article on countdowns.**

Setting Up Location Insertions

Select if you want the location inserted to be at the city level, state level (or provincial in other countries), or country level.

1

Syntax: {LOCATION(Level):default text}

Locations are used from your campaign location targeting Learn more

Location format

◉ **city** (Example: Mountain View)

○ State (Example: California)

○ Country (Example: United States of America)

Write your default text.

2

Default text

APPLY

The Output

Once you've set up the location format and the default text, the text in the headline or description should look something like this:

■ Input: Free Shipping to {LOCATION(Country):the USA}

If a shopper is searching from Mountain View, California, USA...

■ For the city format, they will see: **Free Shipping to Mountain View**

■ For the state format, they will see: **Free Shipping to California**

■ For the country format, they will see: **Free Shipping to United States**

If Google can't pin down their location, they will see:

■ **Free Shipping to the USA**

💡 **Google Ads help article on location insertions.**

General Notes On Ad Copywriting

Always match the landing page

> *What is written on the ad should be directly supported on the landing page, preferably above the fold.*

We Don't Want To Write . . .

See Why X Is the Best without the landing page having clear copy showing why X is the best.

Avoid the Hassle of X without the landing page showing how the product helps avoid that hassle.

Saves Money Over Time without the landing page outlining exactly how it does so.

Don't forget this rule when writing your ad copy.

If you come up with an amazing headline that you'd love to use, but isn't supported by the landing page copy, then try to get that copy on the landing page.

Use eye-catching characters when you can

Google doesn't allow "gimmicky" characters into its ads, such as stars (☆ ✦ ✪ ✳ ✫ ✺) or hearts (♥) or ►triangles◄.

However, some characters are allowed that other advertisers very rarely ever make use of.

What's the point of using them? Every way that you can catch the eye by being different is an advantage.

Character	Name	Use
·	interpunct	A great replacement for the common dash (-).
•	bullet	A great replacement for the common dash (-).
–	en dash	Slightly longer replacement for the common dash.
—	em dash	Even longer replacement for the common dash.
…	ellipsis	An ellipsis suggests more to come if one just clicks the link.
™	trademark symbol	Indicates that the preceding mark is an unregistered trademark.
®	registered trademark	Indicates that the preceding mark is a registered trademark.

"Paying attention to simple little things that most [people] neglect makes a few [people] rich." – Henry Ford

How Can KeyCommerce Help You?

1 Learn & develop your ecommerce skills

Watch our highly regarded **YouTube channel,** followed by over 22,000 store owners and ecommerce learners from around the world. You can also subscribe to our weekly email newsletter to get real-world tested growth and optimization strategies, as well as notifications on anything you may need to know as an ecommerce store owner.

Browse our **"eCommerce Blog"** section, written and structured to be the best resource in the world for anyone starting and growing their online store. It includes strategy guides, setup instructions, checklists and tools. Many readers have commented on the usefulness of this content.

2 Hire us to grow your ecommerce store

We've generated millions for our clients using the methods we've developed over the years with a singular focus on Google Ads for ecommerce. To discover how we can help grow your business:

- Read our case studies, **client success stories**, and video testimonials. **Learn about us.**

- Visit our **"Services" page** to see the process by which we assess whether we're a good fit for each other.

- Claim your **FREE website strategy session with me.**

3 Join our team

If you want to join our team — or learn why **our team** members love working with KeyCommerce — then see our **"Careers" page.**

4 Contact us

We help ecommerce store owners around the world, so **get in touch!**